DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 283 155 CS 210 521

AUTHOR Wassmuth, Birgit L.; Carr, Douglas J.
TITLE Max Headroom, Ad Man of the Eighties: When Commercial Becomes Cult.
PUB DATE Aug 87
NOTE 30p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (70th, San Antonio, TX, August 1-4, 1987).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Computer Graphics; Mass Media; *Merchandising; Popular Culture; Special Effects; *Television Commercials; Television Research
IDENTIFIERS *Coca Cola Company; *Max Headroom

ABSTRACT

With Coca-Cola's selection of a digital, computer-constructed "spokesthing" named Max Headroom, came a dramatic shift toward a reliance on high technology to deliver the advertising message. Headroom was developed in Britain, and made his debut on the Home Box Office television network in 1985. Coca-Cola then bought the rights to Headroom, and by the spring of 1986 the Max Headroom phenomenon had helped the company regain the market it lost the year before with the introduction of New Coke. Although the Headroom character was not originally designed for advertising purposes, its application soon became apparent. Never before in the history of television has a true child of the medium come forward to pitch products. In doing so, Headroom blurs the distinction between the message and the messenger. He is treated like a celebrity, appears on talk shows, and now has his own interview show that is unrelated to his advertisements. Audiences react to Headroom well, and importantly, remember his association with Coke, which makes him Coca-Cola's perfect "spokeshead." The introduction of other Headroom-like commercials worldwide suggests a trend in the design and production of television-specific commercials. (Appended are: (1) a Max Headroom chronology, (2) notes, (3) references--divided into books, articles, authorless articles, and videos, (4) a descritpion of the audiovisual aids that accompany the talk, and (5) a selection of newspaper cartoons featuring Max Headroom.) (Author/SKC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED283155

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Advertising
Special Topics

Max Headroom, Ad Man of the Eighties: When Commercial Becomes Cult

Dr. Birgit L. Wassmuth
and
Douglas J. Carr

School of Journalism
University of Missouri
Columbia, MO 65211

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Douglas J. Carr

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS 210521

A paper presented to the Advertising Division at the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication in San Antonio, Texas, August 1-4, 1987

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ABSTRACT

Max Headroom, Ad Man of the Eighties: When Commercial Becomes Cult

Dr. Birgit L. Wassmuth
Office (314) 882-7280 Home (314) 449-6121
Douglas J. Carr
Office (314) 882-9187 Home (314) 442-9022
School of Journalism, University of Missouri
Columbia, MO 65211

With Coca Cola's selection of a digital, computer-constructed spokes"thing" named Max Headroom, came a dramatic shift toward a reliance on high technology to deliver the advertising message. By the spring of 1986 the Max Headroom phenomenon helped regain the market lost the year before with the introduction of New Coke.

The Headroom character was not originally designed for advertising purposes, but its application soon became apparent. Never before in the history of television has a true child of the medium come forward to pitch advertisements. In so doing, Headroom blurs the distinction between the message and the messenger. The introduction of other Headroom-like commercials suggests a trend in the design and production of television- specific commercials.

The developing iconography of Max Headroom and its continued impact on television commercials will have its roots traced to 1986 by advertising historians as the seminal year when the true "talking head" made itself manifest.

Presented to the Advertising Division at the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication in San Antonio, Texas, August 1-4, 1987

Max Headroom, Ad Man of the Eighties: When Commercial becomes Cult

"Life is television, so be what I am - 'Box Clever'!"

Max Headroom

Introduction

Advertising is in the message business. The messages have to be brief, persuasive, easily recognized and understood. Television commercials are a specialized form of advertising. They deliver their message in compact, concentrated, direct attempts to influence behavior. The success of such messages on television depends on the audience recognizing the message. Such recognition to date has derived from a common ground of experience and understanding.

In comes Max Headroom, a digital, computer-constructed talking head, and he breaks all the rules. This kind of high-tech imagery is new to everyone. No longer is there a common ground of experience or understanding and yet, Max has become *the* spokes"thing" for Coca-Cola and already has his following, especially among teenage consumers. More than Clara with "Where's the beef?" and John "Mighty Mouth" Moschitta with "When it absolutely, positively has to be there," Max has become a heavily imitated advertising con man. The fact that his existence is limited to the video screen doesn't keep Max from having a mind of his own and a uniquely weird sense of humor. As predicted by many writers, Max has become a cult figure and "C-c-c-catch the Wave" has become a household term within a few months after his debut in advertising in the spring of 1986.

A short history of Max Headroom

Nearly five years ago the American television audience was not aware of Max Headroom. No one was. Britain's Channel Four was in the middle of developing a half-hour show dedicated to rock video presentations à la MTV, but they needed a

creative genius, someone to draw up just the right format. Enter Peter Wagg, then head of creative services at Chrysalis Records in London.

Wagg already had worked on a video-awards program with an editor at Channel Four so it was only natural that the fledgling network would turn to someone whose work was known. Chrysalis provided money for developing the music video program but Wagg had to come up with the host. "I didn't want a human being," Wagg says in recounting the first thoughts of a computer-generated host. "I felt that an individual presenter wouldn't travel." [1] The program was set for international distribution and Wagg says there were concerns that a host with a British accent wouldn't sell in the United States.

By 1983 Wagg had formed the team to bring his concept of a non-human host to reality. The program was to be called *The Max Headroom Show* , a title suggested by the common British abbreviation of the "maximum headroom" warnings for drivers entering parking garages. Video producers Rocky Morton and Annabel Jankel were brought in and they decided to go all out and create more than computer graphics and animation. "We decided Max should be a character," Jankel says, " a computer-generated TV host."[2]

The Headroom creative team also decided that the new video music show needed some kind of special introduction. Jankel says that "what we really wanted was to make a paranoid-conspiracy movie."[3] Wagg's next move was to sell the idea to the cable giant HBO/Cinemax.

By the middle of 1984 the project was well underway with $500,000 from HBO and a somewhat intriguing title: *Max Headroom: 20 Minutes into the Future*. The original screenwriter had left the group and Steve Roberts signed up to pull the brilliant yet scattered ideas into an hour-long made-for-TV movie.

***20 Minutes into the Future:* A Synopsis**

The basic plot told of a popular television reporter, Edison Carter (played by Matt Frewer), who stumbles across a potentially network-damaging story. His employer, Network 23, has a stranglehold on the ratings, but in order to keep their superior position they have begun to use an insidious form of advertising called *blipverts.*[4] A young computer genius, also in the employ of the network, had developed a way to compress 30 seconds of information into three with the ideal result that viewers did not have time to switch channels during commercial breaks. The result is ideal, that is, until the network execs are told some members of the audience are overly stimulated by the compressed bombardment of information and literally explode after viewing a blipvert.

The reporter's native curiousity draws the ire of the execs and he his nearly killed by a couple of hired thugs. Thinking the reporter is dead, the thugs drop him off at a local body bank - but not before the young computer genius, Bryce Lynch, has a chance to experiment with capturing the reporter's physical likeness and mental essence within a computer. The network is worried that a popular reporter will be missed but Lynch convinces the chairman of the board to consider putting a computer-generated reporter on the air.

Unfortunately the experiment is not a complete success. The computer-generated creature has a few software problems - stutters and ticks that are not air-quality. Its vocabulary seems limited to repeating some of the last words the reporter saw before crashing a motorcycle in an attempt to escape the thugs: "Max. Headroom 2.3m" written on a barrier blocking his escape route. Max Headroom is born.

The balance of the movie follows the recovering reporter's attempts to gain justice against Network 23 and safety from the blipverts. The portable computer with Max Headroom finds its way to a pirate video broadcast station transmitting from a bus in a burned-out warehouse. There Max finds his nitch and his new owners, Blank Reg

and Dominique, find a growing audience intent on following the wit and wisdom of a new host who is not merely *on* television - he *is* television.

Reactions to Max Headroom's debut

The English debut for *20 Minutes into the Future* was April 2, 1985, and the reviews were good. Channel Four pulled one of its largest audiences to date and the start of their music video show was auspicious indeed.[5] Meanwhile, back in the United States, Cinemax prepared for the introduction of Max Headroom as a bi-weekly special to start in the fall of 1985. Cinemax was apparently chosen as the Headroom channel because of the shared name.

The Headroom phenomenon picked up more steam after a special report on the syndicated "Entertainment Tonight" program on November 20, 1985. One of those interviewed for the report was video producer Annabel Jankel. She said that everyone was being groomed for television - politicians, preachers, etc. - so why not deliver the perfectly-groomed TV host? Max Headroom should be the perfect host, and from early indications and audience response, it looked like she was right.

Max Headroom enters the advertising world

The Coca-Cola company was taking notice of Max's rapid rise to popularity. Late in the fall of 1985 and through the winter of 1986, Coke explored the possibility of having Max take over as spokesthing for New Coke. Peter Wagg has said that the Coca-Cola people came over to England with storyboards in hand and just the right image for Max. The McCann-Erickson ad agency negotiated a one-year, $400,000 contract for the rights to Max and, according to Business Week magazine, Coke's sales outpaced Pepsi within a year.[6]

Roy Fleming, a spokesman for Coca-Cola, says the company is thrilled with the success of the New Coke commercials. "New Coke earns approximately $800 million

wholesale for this company," he says. "We certainly attribute some of the success of New Coke to its identification with Max. Max enjoys 76 percent name recognition among teenagers. That's an incredibly high recognition factor. We love Max."[7]

Coca-Cola introduced Max in the spring of 1986. In June Coca-Cola distributed the Video Taste Test Presentation, a collection of eight commercials to be used for in-store promotions, specifically aimed at high school students. By the end of the summer his campaign was gaining high marks from consumers and agencies alike. With the release of his movie on videotape in October, coupled with the publication of two books, Max was becoming a media superstar.

The October 1986 issue of *American Film* described the release of the videotape saying "Max is here and proving his potential to obtain the next great late-night cult following."[8] Indeed, Max was a guest on David Letterman's show earlier in the summer and proved he could hold his own with the normally acerbic host:

> Letterman: "I understand you have a plate in your head."
>
> Max: "Actually, it's a complete china set."[9]

Although Headroom is billed as the "first computer-generated talk show host," he's really a high-tech hybrid. Matt Frewer, the Canadian-born actor who plays both Headroom and his human counter-part in the movie, Edison Carter, must undergo a grueling 4 1/2 hour makeup session for every show or commercial shoot. His head and shoulders are then filmed and scanned, and the electronic image is manipulated with computers. The computerized effect is further enhanced by producer Wagg in using only one out of every twelve frames shot. The combination of jerky motion and voice-processing contribute to the "generated" look.[10]

Various attempts have been made to create a *true* computer-generated person. Rebecca Allen, a graphic designer and computer animation expert at the New York Institute of Technology and the University of California, is one of the few pioneers in this endeaver. During Journalism Week at the University of Missouri in October

1986, she premiered her MTV video "Musique, non stop" for the German group *Kraftwerk*. The video presents a true computer-generated images of four singing "human" male heads.

Full-length films have incorporated elements of computer-generation and subliminal advertising techniques. The 1981 release of *Looker* was billed as a slick mystery drama with computers, advertising and murder, but was not well received by critics nor the audience. The film focused on computer-"generated" male and female models to be used in the production of TV commercials. Another 1981 film, the Canadian release *Agency* also dealt with the manipulation of advertising messages but through subliminal implants. These commercials had a similar purpose as did the *blipverts*, that is to influence the TV viewer's behavior on a subconscious level. It is interesting to note that elements of both films show up in the *Max Headroom* movie, but neither *Agency* nor *Looker* came close to the popularity currently enjoyed by *Max Headroom*.

Max Headroom goes Prime Time

According to an article in *Maclean's* in December 1986, although the Headroom show and movie had not yet been shown on nationally broadcast television, Max was fast becoming one of "the most sought-after marketing commodities" in North America.[11]

But is was as early as November 1986 that ABC television was contracting with Wagg to make six hour-long episodes for a Headroom series to be introduced in the spring of 1987.[12] March 31 was the first night many American viewers got their first, long glance at Max.

A somewhat watered-down, Americanized version of *20 Minutes into the Future* was broadcast following the much-awaited series climax of *Moonlighting*. The audience response was far from overwhelming. While the episode of *Moonlighting*

showing Maddie and David finally consumating their relationship drew a respectable 29.5 national Nielsen rating and a 44 percent audience share, Max let ABC down a bit with a quiet 16.9 / 29. ABC said *Moonlighting* had about 60 million viewers and that about two-thirds stayed around to watch the Headroom premiere.[13]

The *Los Angeles Times* called the Headroom opener "dazzling" and went as far as to say that ABC may have come up with "the most exciting series of the season." Reviewer Lee Margulies mused that the Headroom show was coming on a little too late in the season to help ABC, but since Max is "a man of the future...he'll doubtlessly be willing to help ABC out next season."[14]

Whether Max did get off to a good start with American broadcast television audiences does not seem to weigh heavily in Coca-Cola's decision to continue using the ultimate talking head in the New Coke campaign for spring and summer 1987. Based on Headroom's successful 1986 Coke campaign in which his commercials were voted top TV ad for the year by consumers surveyed by Video Storyboard Tests,[15] Coca-Cola looks to continue Max's influence with multiple campaigns directed toward the young adult audience.

Why is there so much attention being paid to Max as a commercial? According to David Vadehra, president of Video Storyboard Tests (VST), the American public "was waiting for something to happen. When it did, they just went wild." Vadehra says the Headroom character is wacky enough to catch and keep the TV viewer's attention.[16]

Salina Gruber, president of Children's Market Research, says young people are greatly attracted to Max Headroom. "Kids get into Max because they're into high-tech -- they're the computer generation. Kids feel he's one of them."[17]

In order for a commercial to become popular with an audience intent on "zapping" past the ads, the advertising message should be contained within a very entertaining package. John Garrett, a marketing consultant, says, "There's so much

resistance to ads that people have to be drawn in. They can't feel that it's a serious advertising pitch or they'll turn off right away."[18]

Max seems to have the ability to cut through audience resistance. According to an article in *Adweek* in March 1987, "computerized cult hero Max Headroom helped talk Coke to the top" knocking Pepsi out of the No. 1 slot. The article points out the significance of the Headroom campaign "considering Coke was No. 4 in '85 (the Year of Reformulation) and No. 8 the previous year. Max was simply the perfect 'spokeshead' for Coke's 'Catch the Wave' campaign." The article continues, "Young people -- Coke target -- found Max different, weird, eye-catching. Obviously, Coke has finally found a winning formula for its commercials -- high tech and humor -- that's wooing the hearts of the new generation."[19]

On the other hand, in the same *Adweek* issue, an article devoted to determining a "measure of efficiency" in ad campaigns reported that Pepsi-Cola managed to spend less than Coke in registering impressions.

"An eye-catching spot obviously doesn't have much value if people can't recall the product," writes the staff of *Adweek*. "To show how well -- or how poorly -- TV campaigns cut through the clutter to leave a lasting impression, we report each year on advertising efficiency, as measured by New York-based Video Storyboard Tests."[20] The article admits Headroom was the "headline story in soft-drink advertising" in 1986, calling Max "something of a cult figure among young people because of his stammering, off-the-wall humor." The "Catch the Wave" campaign cost more to register an impression than Pepsi's Michael J. Fox ads.

According to *Adweek*, Video Storyboard Tests surveyed 4,000 TV viewers across the country throughout the year. The viewers were asked questions to determine how well they could recall a commercial. Using this sample, VST was able to project a number of average weekly retained impressions from the general audience. The average weekly TV budget for each campaign, from Broadcast Advertisers Reports, was

then taken into account to produce a number called "CPM retained impressions." This then becomes a measure of efficiency as a function of recall and advertising expense.[21]

Coke's score came in at $12.07 compared with Pepsi's $10.92. As Adweek put it, "TV viewers were more captivated by astronauts chasing a runaway Pepsi and Michael J. Fox 'Xeroxing' a cold can of soda."

SOFT DRINKS	Average weekly Retained Impressions* (in millions)	Average weekly TV Media Spending** (in $100,000)	Cost per 1000 Retained Impressions (in dollars)
Coca-Cola	76.9	928	12.07
Diet Coke	24.6	721	29.31
Diet Pepsi	14.8	604	40.81
Pepsi-Cola	74.2	810	10.92
RC Cola	8.0	132	16.50

*Source: Video Storyboard Tests/Campaign Monitor

**Source: Broadcast Advertisers Report [22]

Max Headroom goes global

Since December 1986, Canadian cable channels have been negotiating for broadcast rights to the shows already seen in Great Britain. Dubbed versions of that series have been sold in Spain, West Germany, Italy and even Japan. Meanwhile, Coca-Cola has ordered more Max commercials for most of its North American markets, including a French version for Quebec.

In West Germany, Coke is using a female version of Max to introduce German viewers to the delights of New Coke. During the week she promotes her own commercials which always air on Monday evenings at 6:25pm on ZDF, the second German television network. By the middle of March 1987, *Adweek* was reporting

Max Headroom singing in Spanish to reach the growing Hispanic audience. Pepsi was reportedly countering with a Spanish-language Michael Jackson spot.[23]

Scott Ticer, writing for *Business Week*, reported that Coca-Cola was going on the offensive against Pepsi and that Max would be leading the charge. According to Ticer, one Coke ad has Max asking rhetorically, "If you're all drinking Coke, who's drinking Pepsi?" The same article quotes Coke's senior vice president of marketing, John Reid, saying, "We've learned the hard way," refering to the New Coke marketing blunder of 1985. "Offense is better than defense," Reid says.[24]

The *New York Times*' Richard Stevenson also wrote in March that although "that most American of products, Coca-Cola" still used sentimental approaches for Classic Coke, the New Coke campaign was firmly entrenched with its "deliberately weird, computer-generated character" Max. An executive at McCann-Erickson Worldwide, the agency charged with bringing Max and Cokeology together, said that Max's appeal is based on his ability to distract viewers from the troubles of the real world.[25]

Some advertisers are not sure how long Max will stay popular. According to Stevenson's report, Malcom MacDougall, president of Hill, Holliday, Connors, Cosmopulos / New York, says "Advertising tends to follow the emotional mood of America closely. When a trend hits, everybody jumps on the bandwagon, then it passes and they go off in another direction."[26]

Conclusions

1986 will most probably be identified as the seminal year when the true talking head as introduced by Max Headroom focused the advertising community's attention upon synthetic presenters of commercial messages. The ability to construct and reconstruct a video-based image as the focal point of a commercial message may soon become the norm. As advertisers explore more creative ways to deliver their mesages, the reliance on computer-generation will become more routine.

It may be that Max Headroom will become relegated to that collection of commercial fads such as Burger King's "Herb" or the regionally distributed "Knowhuddamean, Vern?." However, it is more likely that media historians will identify Max Headroom as the extraordinary beginning of the absolute synthesis of medium and message.

Regardless of new technological developments the image of Max Headroom will engender the very essence of television as Uncle Milty and Edward R. Murrow did at the start of the Golden Age of the medium. Perhaps the ultimate impact of Max Headroom may be the uncontested acceptance of fictional characters presented on television as absolute reality. Life, then, *becomes* television and Max Headroom's progeny survive a live birth to become reality. When you cannot tell the street from the screen, the medium's acquisition of reality will no longer be approximate.

Q.E.D.

A Max Headroom Chronology

1982 - Original Channel Four video project begins under the direction of Peter Wagg. Video artists Rocky Morton and Annabel Jankel join the team.

1984 - A shooting script is developed and work begins on the film to introduce Max as a video music show host. The film is called ***20 Minutes into the Future*** and gets financial backing from HBO.

1985 - British audiences get their first taste of Max on April 2. ***20 Minutes into the Future*** captures one of the largest ratings for fledgling broadcast operation Channel Four.

1985 - Corgi Books prints first edition of **Max Headroom's Guide to Life.** Humor writers David Hansen and Paul Owen claim the credit.

1985 - American cable giant HBO/Cinemax introduces Max to stateside cable viewers in a series of "talk-show" specials in the fall.

1985 - Max, his movie and his cable specials are featured on syndicated program "Entertainment Tonight" November 20.

1985 - Coca-Cola contacts Wagg to discuss signing Max as spokeshead for New Coke. Wagg likes the approach the soft drink company plans to take and signs up with agency McCann-Erikson for one year.

1986 - By the spring Max is showing up in a series of Coke ads. The appeal is to young adults and teens identifying with Max's "cool" appearance and "hip attitude." Rate of sales for New Coke takes off and recovers most of what was lost the previous year when the new formula was introduced.

1986 - On June 19 Coca-Cola releases the "Video Taste Test Presentation," a selection of six Max Headroom commercials to be used for special promotions in stores.

1986 - HBO/Cinemax renew Max for the fall and increase his shows to six a month. Bantam Books releases the American printing of both the **Guide To Life** and **Max Headroom: 20 Minutes into the Future** picture book. Karl/Lorimar releases ***20 Minutes into the Future*** on videotape in Mid-October.

1987 - The New Coke "Catch the Wave" campaign is voted the top ad for 1986 in a survey of consumers conducted by Video Storyboard Tests. ABC Television announces the premiere of the Max Headroom Show for March 31. Coca-Cola announces the renewal of Max's contract for another year. The new campaign takes a more aggressive approach toward Pepsi, calling the competitor the "P-word."

By April 1987, Max has been included in nearly 200 articles and reports as tabulated by Mead Data Central's NEXIS database.

Max Headroom Endnotes

[1] Kurt Loder, "Max Mania: A computer generated talk-show host, Max Headroom, has become TV's latest overnight sensation," **Rolling Stone**, 28 August 1986, p. 48.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] The term "blipvert" is easily understood by the British audience who fondly refer to their television commercials as adverts.

[5] Ibid. and Christopher Dunkley, "Meaty Morsels in a Heavy Diet, " **Financial Times**, 10 April 1985, p. 12.

[6] "The Best of 1986 - Advertising: Max Is It," **Business Week**, 12 January 1987, p. 131.

[7] Beth Austin, "The Max Factor," **Chicago Tribune Style**, 31 December 1986, sec. 7, p. 8.

[8] "Fast Forward: Best Bets Among This Month's Releases on Tape. Max Headroom (1986)," **American Film**, October 1986, p. 48.

[9] NBC, "Late Night with David Letterman," 29 July 1986.

[10] Nicholas Jennings, "Making the Most of Max," **Maclean's**, 8 December 1986, p. 66.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] John Carmody, "The TV Column," **Washington Post**, 2 April 1987, p. B10.

[14] Lee Margulies, "Two TV Reviews: 'Headroom' on ABC; 'Gay' on CBS," **Los Angeles Times,** 31 March 1987, Calendar, Part 5, p. 14.

[15] Kim Foltz, "America's New Sweethearts," **Adweek**, 2 March 1987, Special Report section.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] "The 10 Most Popular TV Campaigns," **Adweek**, 2 March 1987, Special Report section.

[20] "The Fourth Annual Measure of Efficiency," **Adweek**, 2 March 1987, Special Report section.

[21] Ibid

[22] Ibid.

[23] "Beat It, Gringo," **Adweek**, 16 March 1987, Corridor Talk section.

[24] Scott Ticer, "Max Headroom Speaks the Dreaded 'P-Word'," **Business Week**, 16 March 1987, p. 40.

[25] Richard W. Stevenson, "Red, White and Blue is Out," **New York Times**, 16 March 1987, sec. D, p. 1.

[26] Ibid.

Bibliography

Hansen, David and Owen, Paul. **Max Headroom's Guide to Life.** New York: Bantam Books, 1986.

Roberts, Steve. **Max Headroom: 20 Minutes into the Future.** New York: Random House, 1986.

Articles

Austin, Beth. "The Max Factor." **Chicago Tribune Style.** 31 December 1986, sec. 7, pp. 5-8.

Carmody, John. "The TV Column." **Washington Post.** 2 April1987, p. 10.

Dunkley, Christopher. "Meaty Morsels in a Heavy Diet." **Financial Times.** 10 April 1985, p. 12.

Elsworth, Peter. "Here's Max, the Ultimate Talking Head." **Kansas City Star.** 12 September 1986.

Foltz, Kim. "America's Sweethearts." **Adweek.** 2 March 1987, Special Report section.

Giges, Nancy. "Adman of the Year." **Advertising Age.** 29 December 1986, pp. 1, 26, 27.

Giges, Nancy. "'Feisty' Reid." **Advertising Age.** 24 November 1986, pp. 3, 82.

Giges, Nancy and Alter, Stewart. "Coke downplays shift of Classic to McCann." **Advertising Age.** pp. 3, 75.

Jennings, Nicholas. "Making the Most of Max." **Maclean's.** 8 December 1986, p. 66.

Loder, Karl. "Max Mania: A computer generated talk-show host, Max Headroom, has become TV's latest overnight sensation." **Rolling Stone**. 28 August 1986, pp. 47-48.

Margulies, Lee. "Two TV Reviews: 'Headroom' on ABC; 'Gay' on CBS." **Los Angeles Times.** 31 March 1987, Calendar, Part 5, p. 14.

McGuigan, Cathleen and Foote, Donna. "A Talking Head." **Newsweek.** 13 January 1986, p. 59.

Rafferty, Terrence. "A Star is Generated." **Advertising Age.** 17 November 1986, p. 18.

Reiss, Craig. "Fast-Forward Ads Deliver." **Advertising Age.** 27 October 1986, p. 3.

Roush, Matt. "Maddie, David and Max Monopolize the Viewers." **USA TODAY.** 2 April 1987, sec. D, p. 3.

Skenazy, Lenore. "Taking Mythology to the Max." **Advertising Age.** 15 September 1986, p. 64.

Stevenson, Richard. "Red, White and Blue is Out." **New York Times.** 16 March 1987, sec. D, p. 1.

Ticer, Scott. "Max Headroom Speaks the Dreaded 'P-Word'." **Business Week.** 16 March 1987, p. 40.

Walters, Barry. "Video to the Max." **Village Voice.** 5 August 1986.

Waters, Harry. "Max Goes Mainstream." **Newsweek.** 6 April, 1987, p. 55.

Williams, Joseph. "Cola Control." **Missourian Sunday.** 16 November 1986, pp. 10-11.

Articles without an author

"Beat It, Gringo." **Adweek.** 16 March 1987, Corridor Talk section.

"Coke Wants to Erase the 'P-Word'." **Adweek.** 23 February 1987, pp. 1, 8.

"Fast Forward: Best Bets Among This Month's Releases on Tape. Max Headroom (1986)." **American Film.** October 1986, p. 48.

"Half-human TV marketing star." **Columbia Daily Tribune.** 17 November 1986, p. 9.

"Max Headroom." **People.** 25 August 1986, p. 73.

"Max Headroom: Fernsehstar aus dem Computer." **Hessische Allgemeine Zeitung.** 27 July 1986.

"Max Headroom is Half Human, Rude - And a Huge Hit." **Business Week.** 13 October 1986, p. 47.

"Max is it." **Business Week.** 12 January 1987, p. 131.

"Max Mania Hits Mizzou." **Missouri Alumnus.** January-February 1987, p. 7.

"The Fourth Annual Measure of Efficiency." **Adweek.** 2 March 1987, Special Report section.

"The 10 Most Popular TV Campaigns." **Adweek.** 2 March 1987, Special Report section.

"TV Commercial: Pop Quiz." **Advertising Age.** 13 October 1986.

"Two Wild'N Crazy Guys on Cable." **Glamour.** November 1986, p. 212.

TV Shows and Videos

"Entertainment Tonight." 20 November 1985.

"Good Morning, America." **ABC.** 31 March 1987.

"Late Night with David Letterman." **NBC.** 29 July 1986.

"Max Headroom: 20 Minutes into the Future." **Karl-Lorimar Video.** 1986.

"Max Headroom." The Series. **ABC.** 31 March 1987.

"The Max Headroom Show." **Cinemax.** 20 September 1986.

"Video Taste Test Presentation." **Coca-Cola.** 19 June 1986.

Max Headroom, Ad Man of the Eighties:
When Commercial becomes Cult

APPENDIX

Supporting Material

This paper will be accompanied by visual supporting material including Coca-Cola commercials, video clips from *Max Headroom: 20 Minutes into the Future*, interviews and news items and slides of comics and editorial cartoons. The authors will prepare two videotapes, a 7min version for use during the paper presentation and a 30min version for a special showing to interested conference participants. The tapes will include clips from:

- **Entertainment Tonight, November 20, 1985**

- **"Catch the Wave" commercial**

- **Video Taste Test commercials**

-**"Paranoimia," MTV video, The Art of Noise**

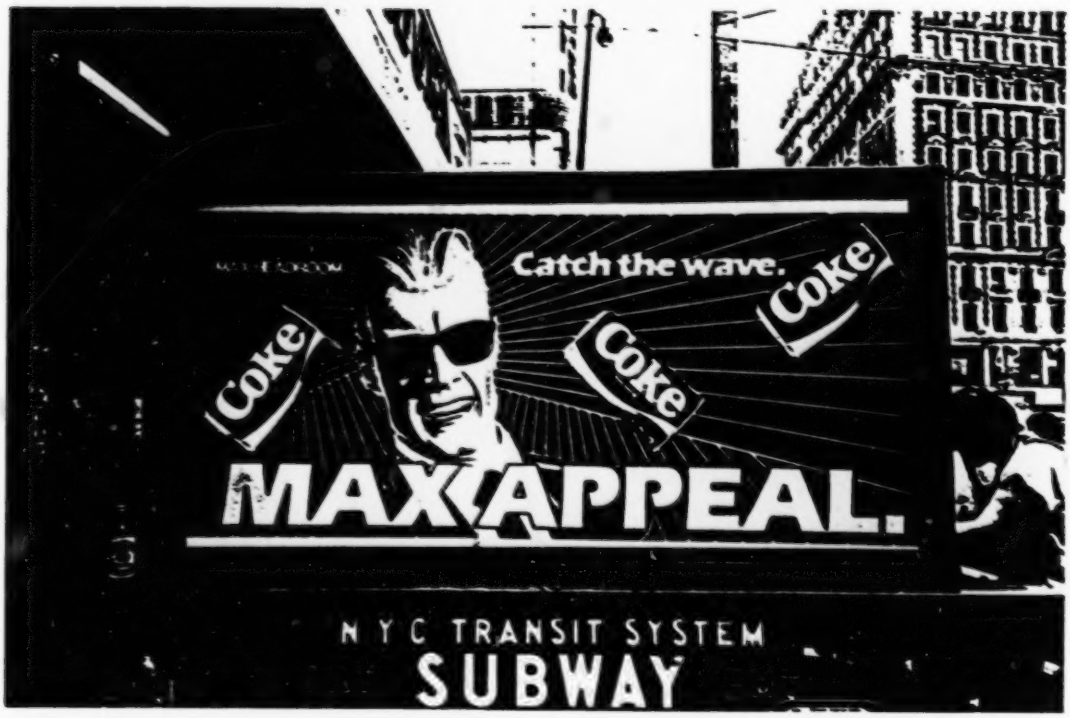
- **The Max Headroom Show, Cinemax, September 20, 1986**

- **Good Morning America, March 30, 1987**

- **Three clips from *20 Minutes into the Future***
    - **scene on blipverts**
    - **Network 23 ratings**
    - **Max Headroom's debut on TV**
    - **Matt Frewer talking with Max Headroom**

- **"Cokeologists' Reunion," commercial**

Outdoor Billboard



Times Square, New York City

August 1986

Editorial Cartoon

by Stein

HI, I'M MAX HEADROOM! I'M NOT REAL; I'M A COMPUTER-GENERATED VIDEO IMAGE, SO IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT I WANT TO BE YOUR CONGRESSMAN!
STEIN
CLICK! CLICK! CLICK!
10-C

The Columbia Missourian

October 28, 1986

Maxine Legroom, Playboy's Playmate of the Minute

PLAYMATE DATA SHEET

NAME: Maxine Legroom

BUST, WAIST, HIPS, HEIGHT, WEIGHT: Vary with mood and screen size.

BIRTH DATE: Yesterday.

BIRTHPLACE: Industrial Lust & Magic.

AMBITION: To be reprogrammed as the first 3-D hologram foldout.

TURN-ONS: Laser massages, electrical storms, high-tech lingerie.

TURN-OFFS: Hackers, signal scramblers, guys who dump their programs with a single stroke.

FAVORITE BOOKS: What's a book?

FAVORITE PERFORMERS: Betty Boop, Barbarella, the Jetsons.

FAVORITE SPORT: People watching.

IDEAL MAN: Max Headroom from the neck down.

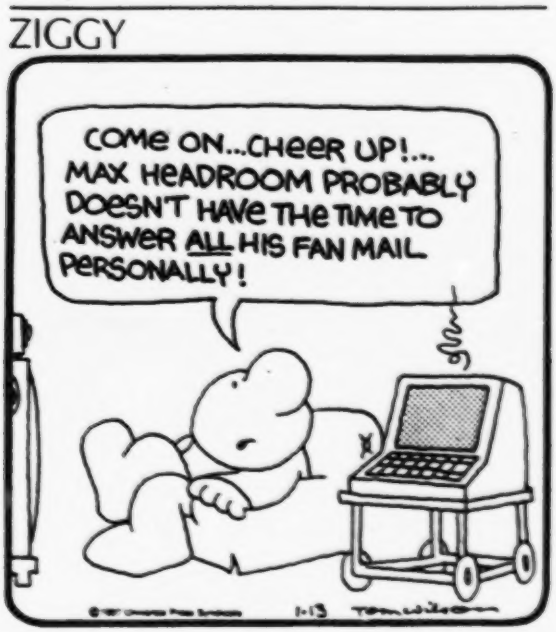
SECRET FANTASY: To spend an evening in Paul Shaffer's synthesizer.

1943/My earliest incarnation, as a V-2 scientist's synthetic polka partner.

1984/My first close-up. Hair of the dog!

Late 1984/The basement tapes--my programmer finally finds my boobs!

ZIGGY



Columbia Daily Tribune

January 13, 1987

ZIPPY

ZIPPY
"THE CONTEST THAT REFUSED TO DIE"
WOW!! THE ZIPPY "CHARGING CONTEST" WAS OVER WEEKS AGO BUT NEW ENTRIES STILL KEEP COMING IN! ARE WE SUPPOSING THE WINNER WON THEY YET?
SOME OF THESE LATE ARRIVALS ARE INCREDIBLE!! LOOKS LIKE I'VE GOTTA RANDOMIZE PRIZES!
"LYNN" OF LAWRENCEVILLE (NJ) SENT IN THIS ELABORATE RENDITION OF A 1950s TV SET WITH A PLASTIC COLOR OVERLAY METIC TALKING CLEVER!
"NILS" OF GROSSE POINTE (MI) SENT ME FULL OF HOLES! DOES THAT MEAN HE SEES THROUGH ME?
THIS IS ONE OF TH' MORE COMPLEX JOKES ... 3 INTELLECTUALS FROM GAINESVILLE (FL) CONCEIVED THE ENTIRE EVOLUTION! YOU'RE A PERVERTED PIN-HEAD!!
"WILL" OF BACTRIANS WANTS TO SEND ME OFF WITH A WILD, NEW HI-TECH WORLD AS "ZIPPY HEADROOM"!
HERE THEY ARE- THE SIX NEW WINNERS. JEEZ, I HOPE THIS CONTEST IS FINALLY OVER!
• JEFFREY SHEEHAN (PROPCA CA)
• NILS HOVING (GROSSE POINTE MI)
• BRENNER HARRY & WRIGHT (GAINESVILLE FL)
• KATHY STRICKER (COLUMBIA MO)
• WILL MEYERS (BOWLING GREEN MO)
WOW! WHEN WINNERS YOUR 1987 ZIPPY CELEBRANTS ARE IN TH' MAIL!!

Columbia Daily Tribune

January 30, 1987

ZIGGY

Columbia Daily Tribune

February 9, 1987

ZIPPY

ZIPPY
"CAPRA-CORNED"
Y'KNOW, IT'S REALLY A MISTAKE TO TRY & REMAKE CERTAIN CLASSIC FILMS--
I AGREE-- "ASTRO-BOY" SHOULD NOT BE TAMPERED WITH!!
ONCE TH' DEFINITIVE VERSION HAS BEEN MADE, WHAT'S TH' POINT OF DUPLICATING IT?
I JUST CAN'T SEE JIM NABORS AND SILLY STRUTHERS IN "TOP HAT '87"--
ACTUALLY, JUST BY CONSTANTLY REDOING SOME CLASSICS, THEY START TO LOSE THEIR COMPR-- --WHAT'S ON TONIGHT, ZIP??
MAY HEADROOM IMITATES JIMMY STEWART, DONNA REED & LIONEL BARRY-MORE ON CHANNEL 46 AT 8!!
WHAT'S IT CALLED?
"IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFESTYLE"--

Columbia Daily Tribune

February 26, 1987

BLOOM COUNTY

AH! CARE FOR A REFRESHING COLA, MR. BAILEY?
CERTAINLY, MR. BLOOM. BUT WHICH COLA TO CHOOSE?
Cola
1
CONSIDER, SIR, THAT PEPSI COMMERCIALS STAR MICHAEL J. FOX AND MICHAEL JACKSON.
POINT OF ORDER. JACKSON WILL NOT ACTUALLY DRINK SODA POP.
2
TRUE. AND BOTH BILL COSBY AND MAX HEADROOM PERSONALLY ENDORSE COKE.
YET THE PRESIDENT OF THE PEPSI CO. HAS WRITTEN A BOOK DESCRIBING THE COKE CO. AS BEING RUN BY FIZZ-HEADS.
3
COUNTERPOINT: THE HEAD OF COKE HAS DONE THE SAME IN REVERSE.
SAY... WHERE DO YOU GO FOR YOUR COLA NEWS?
4
WHY, "USA TODAY" OF COURSE... FOR THOUGHTFUL DAILY COVERAGE.
I, MYSELF, AM AN "ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT" MAN.
5
THE DILEMMA REMAINS. COKE OR PEPSI? OR DO WE OVERLOOK AN EVEN MORE VITAL NATIONAL ISSUE?
YES. BOTH TASTE LIKE MALTED BATTERY ACID.
6
Cola
MILK, THEN?
LOVELY! WHOLE OR SKIM?
7

Columbia Daily Tribune

April 5, 1987